

yearn for and love peace to make sure it doesn't happen.

Yitzhak Rabin was my partner and my friend. I admired him, and I loved him very much. Because words cannot express my true feelings, let me just say, *shalom, chaver*, goodbye, friend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:48 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Rabin's widow, Leah.

## Statement of Condolence on the Death of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel

November 5, 1995

Prime Minister Rabin gave his life to Israel, first as a soldier for its freedom, then finally as a martyr for its lasting peace.

For his example, his friendship to the United States, and his warm friendship to me, I am eternally grateful.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: The President inscribed this statement in a condolence book at the Israeli Embassy. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

## Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One

November 5, 1995

### *Middle East Peace Process*

Q. This is quite a President gathering, Mr. President, your thoughts as the flight of this—

*President Clinton.* We're all going to pay our respects to Prime Minister Rabin. We all knew him. And we're going to express our support for Israel and for the peace process.

Q. President Carter said the other day when he was being interviewed that he thought, given the circumstances, there logically enough would be a pause, not a pause in peacemaking but a reflective pause, and then, of course, the process should gather again. How quickly do you think the Israelis can pull themselves together?

*President Clinton.* I don't have any idea. We don't know yet. We are going to have meetings when we're there. We're going to visit and then maybe we'll have some more—some better thoughts for you then.

Q. Mr. President, collectively when you look at the manifest of this trip, what message does it send to the Israelis, Middle East, and the entire world for that matter?

*President Clinton.* Well, I think it should send, first of all, the message that the United States still stands as a genuine friend and a partner to the people of Israel, Republicans and Democrats alike. We have decades of dedication to the cause of peace here, from the work President Carter did with the Camp David accords to the work President Bush did in starting this process that has been consummated in the last couple of years, the Secretaries of State that are here, the leaders of both parties in the Congress. The United States is standing with Israel and standing for the cause of peace. And we're standing strong and deep.

Q. President Bush, what goes through your mind, sir, as you consider all the familiar faces on this trip and the message that it may be sending to the rest of the world?

*President Bush.* Well, of course, I'm very grateful to President Clinton for personally inviting me. Barbara and I felt close to Prime Minister Rabin, as do the others here, very close to him. I remember when he visited us in our home up in Maine and all of that.

And so I would simply leave the policy to President Clinton but simply say I'm sure it will be a very emotional event, and I hope that it conveys that the Republicans, Democrats, whatever, are together in the support of Israel and clearly in support of the peace process. And that's all I think we can expect from this.

*Q.* The Syrian track seems awfully tough, even before this. Various approaches have been tried; President Carter actually mediated 16 tough days. You've talked to us on it. Do you have some new tactic? I don't know how many ways there are to go about it, but have you thought of some way to break this stalemate that might work?

*President Clinton.* I think I should defer all substantive conversations about this until after the funeral and after the meetings. Then I will—on the way back perhaps I'll have something more to say about it. But I think it would be inappropriate—this is a time of national mourning for the people of Israel and a time when all of us who knew Prime Minister Rabin feel a great sense of loss and an enormous sense of respect, even awe, for what he did and for the sacrifice he paid. I'd like for us to take the time to properly honor that, and then on the way back perhaps something will emerge from our meetings which will be useful for me to comment on.

*Q.* Will you be seeing Mr. Netanyahu, or can you give us an idea of who you will see?

*Press Secretary Mike McCurry.* We'll do that for all of you here.

*President Clinton.* Mike has that.

*Q.* President Carter, we haven't heard from you. What are your thoughts about the message that should be sent by this delegation that includes people who were in your administration—yourself of course?

*President Carter.* Well, I've known Prime Minister Rabin for 24 years and admired him personally and as a great leader. I'm honored to be invited by President Clinton to participate. I think it was a very wise thing on the part of the President to put together this tremendously impressive delegation because in this time of sorrow and grief and uncertainty, I think it is very important to every Israeli to know the United States stands beside us with full support.

I wasn't insinuating that the peace process should be delayed, but the comment I made was that the Israelis would have to make this

decision, and for a few days at least we shouldn't be pushing them on an exact schedule for the peace process.

But I think it's important, too, for the Israelis to not only know that we are supportive of Israel but also supportive of the peace process. And our coming, I think, is closely related to that.

So I hope that President Clinton's ideas for this mission, burdened as we are with sadness and the personal loss, will be productive for Israel and for the peace process.

*Q.* People have said that one of the causes of this is the polarization that has occurred in Israel because of the peace process and the very vigorous opposition to it. Is there any lesson for us in the United States with what happened yesterday?

*President Clinton.* Well, of course we've dealt with some polarization of our own. And I think the lesson is that in a free and vital society, you want the widest range of freedom of speech. But words can have consequences; people can be driven to extremes. And our society only works when—any democracy only works when freedom is handled responsibly. And I think that's the lesson here.

The Israelis have been through all these wars, all this tension for all these decades and never had a political assassination before. And I hope, I hope, it will never happen again. I admire their flourishing democracy; I like the big and raucous arguments they have. But they should do it respecting one another's innate patriotism and dignity and fundamental right to participate. We've got to keep this thing within proper bounds.

But you know, that's something we all have to work on; all democracies have to work on that. Israel doesn't—that's not just a comment about Israel. I'm sure they'll have the time to reflect on all of that. And they are a very great people, a very great democracy, and I'm sure they'll work it out.

NOTE: The exchange began at 6:05 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route to Tel Aviv, Israel. Former Presidents George Bush and Jimmy Carter were members of the U.S. delegation attending Prime Minister Rabin's funeral. A reporter referred to Likud Party leader Binyamin Netanyahu.